MEADOW SPRITE AND OTHER TALES

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SCHOTTENFELS

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THE MEADOW SPRITE

AND

OTHER TALES OF MODERN GERMANY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The stories of which this volume is composed are taken from the German of Rudolph Baumbach and Richard von Volkman, two of the most charming story writers of modern German literature

In my last book of stories, I included three stories by these two writers, as an experiment, to see if the children would find as great an interest in modern as in ancient German Classics.

Next to *Parzival* and *Lohengrin*, they liked the *Seven-League Boots* and *George the Dreamer* best. As a result, the present volume was prepared, one story at a time, which was tried with gratifying results with the various classes, who came under my instruction while I was substituting in the schools of New York.

Although designed especially for children of the fourth year, I used the stories in type-written form as reading material for third and fifth year classes, and as material for literature with two different eighth grade classes. I also made use of them as story-telling material with two different second year

classes, and was pleased to find that they aroused an equal interest and delight in every one of these grades.

They are taken from Baumbach's *Summer Tales* and *Narrations and Fairy Tales*, each of which is more dainty and fascinating than the last, and seem to breathe forth from every page their author's love of Nature and his native folk-lore.

Richard von Volkman, the author of six of these tales, was one of the greatest surgeons and surgical writers the nineteenth century has known. At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, he went to France at the head of the German Medical Service, and it was here, while encamped outside of the city, during the long siege of Paris, that he whiled away the hours of his enforced idleness by writing the *Reveries* from which these are taken.

The *Reveries* are a series of delightful stories which he sent to his children enclosed in his letters from his post of duty, and which were afterward published in book form, under the assumed name of Richard Leander, and immediately received the popularity they so fully merited.

GERTRUDE R. SCHOTTENFELS.

THE MEADOW SPRITE AND OTHER TALES

THE MEADOW SPRITE

There was once a young Professor who, despite his youth, was so very wise and learned, that when the Seven Wise Men of Greece chanced to visit that part of the world, and entered into a discussion with him, they appeared like school-boys in comparison.

One bright spring morning this same Professor went out into the country to hear the grass grow — an art which he also understood. He wandered about among

the light green foliage of early May, and watched the butterflies, those bright wonders of the air, flitting about among the daisies.

He heard the crickets in the grass, and the birds among the boughs, and the frogs in the meadow-brook, all singing their song of love and spring. Suddenly he thought of his native village, which he had left many years before to enter the university. And thinking of that recalled to his mind the little dark-browed maid who had given him a ginger-bread heart, and who, to his great surprise, had shed bitter tears at parting. And a strange longing awoke in the Professor's well-regulated heart.

Next morning this same longing moved him to pack his clothes, take up his gnarled staff, and to wander out of the city-gates, into the green world beyond. Three days later, he spied the blossoming fruit-trees

and the steeple and blue tiled roof of his native church. And borne on the breeze there was wafted to him the soft, sweet chimes of the belfry.

"I wonder if she will remember me," he said to himself. "It is hardly to be expected, I fear, and no doubt I shall have difficulty in finding the former little Gretchen among the eighteen-year-old girls of the village. But her eyes, her coal black eyes, will surely disclose her to me. And if only I chance to find her sitting on the stone bench in front of her door, I will just walk up to her, and the rest will follow quite naturally."

Whereupon he tossed his hat up in the air, and gave such a shout that his own voice frightened him. Then he looked around him sheepishly, fearful lest some one had witnessed his foolishness. But with the exception of a field-mouse, fleeing

hastily to the shelter of its hole, not a living creature was to be seen.

With heart beating high with hope, he entered the town. The chimes were silent now, but he heard instead the strains of violin and flute. A wedding procession was wending its way through the narrow village streets. The bridegroom, a young and stalwart peasant, looked as proud and happy as if the whole world were his.

The bride, decked in snowy array, held her eyes modestly downward beneath her bridal-wreath. But once, just as they were passing the Professor, she raised her lids for a moment, and those large coal-black eyes told him instantly who it was walking beneath that gleaming wreath.

And the poor fellow turned on his heel and, all unrecognized, retraced his steps. It was high noon. The fields shone green and gold in the sun, and where the stream-

(F. 11) THE BRIDAL PROCESSION *A. Müller*

let flowed, thousands and thousands of glistening sparks danced upon its surface. All creation rejoiced in the light and warmth.

All but the poor Professor. To-day the bright light seemed to hurt his eyes, and he shielded them with his hand as he strode onward. After going some distance he was joined by a traveler, who seemed to be returning from a long, long journey, for he looked like a walking cloud of dust.

"Good friend," quoth the stranger, "the sun dazzles your eyes, does it not?" The other replied that it did.

"Well, if such is the case, I know of no better remedy than these smoked glasses which I wear. Try them once." With these words, he removed them from his eyes, and handed them to the Professor.

The latter, just to gratify the amiable stranger, adjusted the sad-colored glasses

to his eyes. And sure enough, they instantly ceased smarting, the sunshine lost its bright glare, the meadows, dotted here and there with red, blue, and yellow flowers, the trees and bushes, and even the blue sky overhead turned to a dull and cheerless gray. All of which seemed eminently appropriate to the disappointed scholar.

"Are your glasses for sale?" he inquired.

"They are in good hands," returned the stranger, "and I have another pair with me. Keep them, I pray you, as a remembrance, my dear Professor."

'What! You know me?" cried the other. "May I ask"—

"Who I am?" finished the stranger. "My name is Spleen. Farewell."

And with these words he withdrew into a field-path, and was soon lost to view. The Professor, however, fastened the glasses

more securely on his nose, and continued his homeward way.

Many years had passed since the events just related, and the Professor had grown to be a crusty old bachelor, who had forgotten how to enjoy anything. He still made excursions into the country, but the green trees and glowing flowers no longer attracted his notice.

He plucked the flowers by their roots, carried them home, where he pressed and dried them. Then he laid the flower-mummies between gray blotting papers, and wrote their names in Latin underneath, and this was his one enjoyment, if enjoyment it may be called.

Once, in one of his wanderings, he came to an out-of-the-way valley, where a little brook ran merrily along and turned the mill. And since he was very thirsty, he asked the old woman who sat sunning her-

self before the door, if she would please give him a drink. The old dame rose at once, and offered him her seat, while she went inside for the drink.

A few minutes later a young girl emerged from the house, with bread and milk in her hands, which she set before the stranger at the door.

He wished very much to see if she were ugly, but it was impossible for him to tell through his smoked glasses, and he did not wish to remove them, for fear the sun would hurt his eyes. In silence he ate the proffered food, and as the miller's daughter refused to take pay for it, he extended his hand in farewell, and went on. But she stood still, looking after him, until he disappeared among the bushes. Then she went back into the house, wondering what had befallen the sad-looking stranger.

The meadow valley must have fostered some rare plants on its grassy bosom, for exactly three days afterwards he came that way again, and again he called at the mill. Then he took to calling regularly every few days, and soom became a welcome guest. He brought the old grandmother sugar, coffee, snuff, or some other sensible gift, and always entertained the miller with edifying conversation. But never once did he offer to exchange a word with the miller's golden-haired daughter, but contented himself with watching her every move through his gray glasses. This did not escape the miller's notice, you may be very sure, and he often slyly nudged his mother, who nodded her gray head comprehendingly. One day, as the Professor left the mill, and was walking along the edge of the meadow, he noticed a mole caught in a trap, endeavoring to struggle itself free from the death-snare.

The kind-hearted man went over, freed the little prisoner, and set it on the ground. Then man and mole each went his way. But that same evening as he sat in his study, a bat flew in the Professor's open window. This was no uncommon occurrence. But on the back of this particular bat there sat a little elfman, no larger than your thumb. He dismounted in front of the astonished man, and made a sweeping courtesy.

"What do you wish?" asked the scholar, in no too friendly tones. "Go to some half-witted writer, and leave sensible people to work undisturbed."

The elf, however, took it all in good part. He drew nearer, seated himself upon the inkstand and said: "Nay, do not chide me, nor drive me away, since I have come in all friendliness. This morning you rescued me from an evil plight; I was the mole you released from the trap."

"Really! And pray, what is the character you now assume?" asked the scholar, looking at the little man attentively through his spectacles. He was a very elegant little figure, indeed, and if the Professor had not had on gray glasses, he would have observed that the little man was clad in a green coat and bright yellow cap.

"I am Ranunculus, the Meadow Sprite," rejoined the midget. "My servants tend the plants and grasses. Some of them wash the plants with dew, others comb them with sunbeams, and still others carry nourishment to their roots. These latter I wished to surprise at their work, this morning, and disguised myself as a mole so as to be unrecognized by them. While in this form, I fell into a trap, from which you rescued me.

"Therefore I have come here to thank you, and to offer you a service in return."

"Let me hear what it is," said the other.

"You are a very learned man," continued the other. "You know all the flowers and plants that grow on the mountains and fields, in the forests and meadows. But there is one plant you do not know."

"What is it?" asked the Professor, now all attention.

"It is a little flower called heartsease."

"No, I do not know it," admitted the Professor.

"Well, I do," said the elf, "and I will tell you where you may find it. If you follow the mill-pond, with which you are already acquainted, to its very source, you will come upon some rocks among which there is a cave, which is said to be a dwarf's cave. There, just before its entrance, the flower, heartsease, blooms. But, mind you, it blossoms only on the Sunday following

Pentecost, and only at the hour of sunrise. But whosoe'er is on the spot at that magic hour, may pluck the blossom. Have I made myself clear?"

"Fully," replied the scholar.

"Then fare-thee-well," said the elfman, mounting his winged steed. And he flew straightway through the open window, leaving the Professor rubbing his eyes in amazement, and wondering if he were really awake. Finally he shook his head, and buried himself in a volume bound in parchment.

A few days after, the miller's pretty daughter and her grandmother were sitting before their door spinning. It was the hour of twilight, and as their wheels whirred round, the old dame was telling the young girl of Lady Berchta, the Good Spirit of the South, who rewarded industrious spinners by presenting them with huge knots

of flax, which afterward changed into yellow gold, and other of her marvelous doings.

She also related the story of the sleeping man of the dwarf's cave, who was under a magic spell, and must sleep on till awakened by some maiden's kiss. Only once every hundred years did he become visible, and then should some maiden be on the spot with three kisses she could break the magic spell, and become his bride as a reward.

So the old dame spun her stories, and the pretty grand-daughter spun them still farther, as though they were the threads of flax revolving through her slender fingers. The stars rose in the heavens. It was the blossoming time of the elder, and presently their sweet scent overcame the maiden, and she could scarcely keep her drowsy lids open. So she sought her chamber and retired.

In the night, it seemed to her that a little elfman, wearing a green coat and a golden cap appeared to her, and regarding her in the most friendly way, said, "You lucky child! For you, and no other, is the treasure of the cave destined. To-morrow is the day upon which the sleeping man of the cave becomes visible. At sunrise he may be seen slumbering at the entrance of the cave. And if you will not be timid, but will kiss him three times, the spell which binds him will be broken, and he will be your own.

"But be very careful not to speak a word, nor even let a sound escape you while breaking the enchantment! For if you do, the slumberer will sink three thousand fathoms beneath the earth, and be obliged to sleep another hundred years ere he can be released." Thus spake the elf, and vanished.

The maiden awoke and rubbed her eyes, and through the slats of the shutters beheld the first gray streaks of dawn. A sweet odor as of new-mown hay filled the room. Then the girl arose and dressed herself, and softly left the room and the house. She went along, carefully holding up her long dress from the dewy grass, till she reached the Dwarf's Cave.

The forest birds began to sleepily bestir themselves, and tune their throats in the branches overhead. The white mist sank to the ground, and disappeared in long streaks across the meadows, and the tops of the pine trees gleamed golden in the sunshine.

There stood the miller's daughter before the entrance of the cave, and there on the mossy stone, sat a man fast asleep, just as the elf had predicted. She almost screamed aloud, so closely did the slumberer resemble

the Professor. Yes, even to the smoked glasses, which he wore upon his nose. Fortunately, she remembered the sprite's warning, and noiselessly, but with fast-beating heart, she made her way to his side, piously resolved to break the spell which bound him. Nor, strange to say, did the task now seem so distasteful to her.

Bending lightly over him, she kissed him on the lips, and the sleeper made a movement, as though he would fain awaken. She kissed him the second time, and he awoke and stared at her through his spectacles, as if she were a ghost. But she gathered up her courage, and pressed a third kiss on his lips. Thereupon he arose with such haste, that his glasses fell from his nose to the ground, where they lay in splinters. And now, after so many years, he beheld for the first time the bright, joyous green of early Spring, the vari-colored

flowers, and the heavenly blue of the sky o'erhead.

And in the midst of all this splendor, he saw a maiden as beautiful as a June rose, and as slender as a lily. He quickly strode to her side, and returned the kisses with interest. And the Meadow Sprite, Ranunculus, sat upon a marsh-marigold, and danced for joy with the bees.

Then he sprang down so hastily that he left the flower swaying in the breeze, and went on attending to his all-important work. He had indeed kept his word; the Professor had found his heartsease, and the miller's daughter her fate.

THE KING OF MACAROON LAND

The King of Macaroon Land had just arisen from bed, and was being dressed for the day by the minister of the household. The minister was about to hold out a stocking, into which the royal foot was to be thrust, when he noticed a hole in the heel.

He deftly turned the stocking round, hoping it had escaped the royal eye, which usually concerned itself more with its owner's fine boots than with his stockings. But luck was against him, for the King had observed the hole, and snatching the stocking out of the minister's hand, he exclaimed tragically:

"Of what avail is it that I am King, when I have no Queen to look after me!

Suppose I take unto myself a wife? What think you?"

The minister replied that he considered it a fine idea; one which he himself had been on the point of suggesting, had he not felt sure that the King would that very day give utterance to it.

"Very good," the King rejoined, "but do you for one moment imagine it will be an easy task to find a Princess who will suit me?"

"To be sure," replied the other; "not only one, but ten."

But the King at once proceeded to dispossess his mind of the idea that the task would be a light one. He told how high his ideal and requirements were, and declared that even should he chance to meet with a Princess who fulfilled them all, there was yet another condition, more weighty than all the others, to be considered.

"And pray, what may that be?" asked the minister.

The King replied, "You know how surpassingly fond I am of gingerbread? Well, be she never so beautiful, and clever, and suitable in every other respect, unless she can bake gingerbread exactly to my liking, neither too hard nor too soft, I shall not marry her."

Then he added that in all his broad realm he had never yet met anyone who properly understood the art of baking it. The minister was indeed alarmed, but quickly pulling himself together, he assured his Majesty that he had no doubt but that he would speedily find a princess well versed in that particular branch of culinary lore.

"We will seek her together," said the King. And sure enough, the very next day they set out on a round of visits to all the

nobles of the realm who chanced to have marriageable daughters. They could find but three, however, sufficiently beautiful and clever to appeal to the King's fastidious taste. But the best laid plans, as we all know, oftentimes go astray. And as bad luck would have it, the King found out all too soon, that not one of the three knew how to bake gingerbread.

The first one readily confessed her inability to do so, as soon as his Majesty broached the subject. "But," she added, "I can bake the most delicious almond cakes, which I am sure you will like equally well."

The King declared it must be gingerbread or nothing, and resumed his search.

The second princess smacked her lips when she heard the word, and exclaimed angrily, "Have done with your nonsense! A princess who can bake gingerbread!

There is none! Who ever heard of such foolishness?"

But the King fared worst of all at the hands of the third princess. She did not even give him a chance to ask the question. On the contrary, she forestalled it by asking if he could play the Jews-harp. He was obliged to say no, and she refused to marry him, although she admitted that she regretted the necessity of doing so, for he suited her in every other respect.

"But all my life," she said, "I have vowed I would wed no man who could not play the instrument of which I am so inordinately fond."

So the King and his worthy minister returned home empty-handed, and the King was much dejected, although he declared he presumed naught could have come of it anyway, since he had an inward feeling that she could not bake gingerbread.

But a King must have a Queen. So after several years had elapsed, his Majesty again broached the subject to his minister. But he said sadly he had given up the idea of finding a princess who could bake his favorite. Would the minister kindly go to the first one and ask her to be his bride?

The latter went, but returned in due time, with the tidings that his Majesty was a trifle too late. The Princess had already married another King, the one from the land where the capers grow, and had betaken herself thither, a year or so previously.

"Then go to the second one," begged the King, "and see if she will wed me."

The minister departed to do his bidding. He returned, however, with the sad news that her father greatly regretted that he could not comply with his Majesty's request. He would, indeed, love to have

the King for a son-in-law, but unfortunately, his daughter had died in the meantime.

This was a great blow, but after meditating upon the matter for some time, the King decided to despatch his messenger to the third charmer. Perhaps she, too, had seen fit, in the meantime, to change her mind about the Jewsharp. But he awaited the minister's return with great anxiety this time, for she was his last hope.

And fortunately, in this instance, the Fates saw fit to be kind. For she told the King's messenger that although it had been the dream of her youth to have a husband who could play the Jewsharp, she had found that dreams were fleeting — especially those of youth.

She realized that she could never have her wish, and since the King pleased her in every other respect, she would consent to wed him. When the King heard these

good tidings, he fell upon the minister's neck in gratitude, and promised him high rewards for his kind offices.

Then he set about preparing for the bridal. Bright flags and banners were hung all over the city, and garlands of roses were stretched across the streets, from one ouseh to another. The wedding was celebrated with so much pomp and magnificence that, for fourteen days, no one in the city could talk of anything else.

For a whole year the King and Queen lived very happily, and Jewsharps and gingerbread were apparently forgotten. Then came a day upon which the King arose with his left foot first, in consequence of which everything went wrong. The imperial crown fell down, and the little cross at the top was broken off. To make matters worse, it rained the livelong day. The minister brought in the new maps of the

kingdom, and the King saw with anger that they had been painted red instead of blue, as he had ordered, and to cap the climax, the Queen had a raging headache.

Therefore, you will not be surprised, I am sure, to hear that, for the first time since their marriage, the royal pair began to quarrel. Why, they themselves could not have told you, except that the King was cross, and with the contrariness usual to womankind, the Queen would have the last word.

When they had been exchanging compliments for some moments, the Queen shrugged her shoulders in the most provoking fashion, and said, "I should think you would keep still, and not find fault with everything you see. You are not so perfect, yourself. If I remember rightly, you cannot even play the Jewsharp."

But hardly had the words left her lips,

than the King rejoined spitefully, "And you do not even know how to bake gingerbread!" And now, for the first time, words failed the Queen, and she was quite still, leaving the last word to the King.

He withdrew into his own apartment, rubbed his hands together in glee and said to himself: "It's a good thing for me my wife does not know how to bake gingerbread! With what else could I have retorted when she reproached me with my inability to play the Jewsharp?"

But the Queen cuddled down in one corner of the sofa in her own room, and wept bitter tears. She scored herself most roundly for having been so foolish as to quarrel with the King. And most especially did she grieve over having taunted him with his shortcomings as a musician. She told herself woefully that she could have done nothing more stupid, had she tried.

But the more the King thought the matter over, the better pleased he became, till finally he stood before his wife's picture and began to whistle his favorite melody. Suddenly he noticed a cobweb on the painting, just over her royal nose. So he mounted a chair, and carefully brushed it off with his handkerchief, saying:

"She certainly was in a rage, the dear little wife. I believe I'll go and see what she is doing."

He opened the door and started down the long hall leading to her room. Now, as I have already told you, this was the day upon which everything went wrong. Therefore, you need not wonder when you hear that, although it was quite dark outside, the groom of the chambers had neglected to light the lamps.

The King went down the dark hall toward the Queen's room, carefully feeling

his way with both hands. Suddenly he encountered someone in his path.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It is I," said the Queen's voice.

"And what are you seeking, my dear?" he queried.

"You, to ask your pardon for so grievously offending you," she responded.

"That is entirely unnecessary," declared the King, tenderly embracing her, "since I was really more to blame than you. Besides, I do assure you, I have forgotten all about it long ago. But I really think, for both our sakes, there are two words which should be abolished from the royal dictionary, and they are — Jewsharps — and" —

"Gingerbread," interrupted the Queen, laughing, even while she secretly wiped away the last remnants of her weeping, under cover of the friendly darkness. And with that our story is ended.

THE GOLD TREE

The room in which this story takes place was very simply furnished. Its walls were whitewashed, and their only ornament consisted of a couple of maps, yellow with age. Two narrow beds stood close to the wall, and on the opposite side of the room was a bookshelf and a wardrobe, upon the top of which rested a globe used in studying the earth.

In the centre of the room was a long ink-stained table, and at the table, on two hard wooden chairs, two boys, about twelve years of age, bent over their books. The one with light hair was poring over a volume of Cornelius Nepos, the first book used by students of Latin, and a well-thumbed dictionary. Every now and then, a sigh escaped him.

The brown-haired lad was working out a problem in cubic root of the ninth power.

The Latin student was named John, and the mathematician, Harry. Occasionally the boys would raise their heads from their work to gaze longingly out of the open window, through which the buzzing flies flew in and out.

What a shame to be cooped up in an old school-room, while the golden sunlight bathed every tree and hedge in the garden in a blaze of glory! And as if to mock them, a blooming twig of lilac exhaled its sweetness right in the open window. Another hour must elapse ere they could gain their freedom, and the minutes crept along as slowly as the snails beneath the gooseberry bush outside.

No, it was impossible to shorten their misery, for just outside in the next room

their tutor, Dr. Cudgel, sat at his desk, and the door between the two rooms was wide open. He was supposed to be busy with his writing, but the boys knew well enough that he had seated himself there purposely to keep his eye on them. Oh, no, there was no escaping that study hour!

"Cornelius Nepos might have done something better than to have crossed the old Alps," grumbled John, half audibly; while, "Nine times eighty are seven hundred and twenty," murmured Harry in subdued under tones. Then they stole a look at each other, made a grimace, and yawned.

Suddenly they heard a loud buzzing. A beetle which had been exploring the lilacs outside had flown into the room by mistake. It circled round their heads three times, and then — fell — plump into the ink-well.

"It served the stupid thing right for coming in here," said Harry, in low tones.

"Why didn't he stay out there in the golden sunshine where he was well off? But to be drowned in ink! No, really, that is too miserable a death even for a dolt! Wait, comrade, and I'll rescue you."

He was going to help the struggling insect out with a penholder, but John forestalled him in the work of rescue by holding out his finger to the drowning mite. Then they dried him nicely on a blotter, and looked on with interest while he cleaned himself with his fore-legs.

"Look! He has a red breast-plate and black horns," said John, wiping his inky finger on his hair. "He must be King of the gold beetles. He lives in a castle of jasmine flowers and rose petals. His musicians are crickets and locusts, and he has the glow-worms for his torch-bearers."

"You silly thing!" cried Henry.

But John continued: "And whoever

meets this King of the Gold Beetles, is in truth born under a lucky star. Look out, Henry, something is going to happen — an adventure, or something out of the ordinary. And come to think of it, to-day is the first of May, and more than one wonder has occurred on May Day, as you well know. See how he beckons to us with his feelers, and raises his wing shields. First thing we know, he will be transformed into a little elf, clad in royal robes, with a crown of gold upon his brow."

"Yes, silly, he will fly away," laughed Henry. "Look, there he goes! What did I tell you?"

Both boys ran to the window to look after the beetle. But the flashing little jewel of the air had already winged his circling flight afar, and was out of sight, beyond the garden wall.

Just then they heard a distinct hemming

and hawing in the next room, where their tutor sat, and they hastened back to their lessons.

Suddenly John whispered, "See, the wonder begins!" and pointed to the ink-stand, out of which a slender green twig was growing before their very eyes. It grew and grew, until it touched the ceiling.

"We are surely dreaming," declared Henry, rubbing his eyes.

"No, this is a real live fairy tale, and we are living in it," cried John, rejoicingly.

And the twig spread side-ways, and bore branches and twigs, with leaves and blossoms. The ceiling of the room disappeared, the walls melted away, as by magic, and a dusky forest surrounded the astonished boys.

"Forward!" commanded John, pulling the resisting Henry along with him. "Here comes our adventure!"

The blooming shrubbery parted of its

own accord, and opened up a pathway for the boys. The sunlight broke through the lattice of the forest trees, and lay in a thousand golden flecks upon the mossy carpet. Star-eyed blossoms of glowing colors sprang up out of the moss, and curling tendrils twined about the tree-trunks. Song birds of brilliant plumage fluttered in the trees overhead, and deer and other forest animals sprang nimbly through the bushes.

At last the trees grew less closely together, and a rosy light shone through their trunks, and John whispered, in tones of excitement, "Here it comes!"

They crossed an open meadow, in the centre of which stood a solitary tree. Yet it was no ordinary tree, you may be sure. No, indeed! It was the wonder tree of which John had so often heard, the tree with leaves of gold.

Both boys stood speechless in amazement. Then suddenly a dwarf emerged from behind the tree. He was no larger than a three-year-old child, but he was not misshapen, as dwarfs so frequently are. Far from it. He was beautifully formed, graceful and slender, and he wore a green mantle, and bore a golden helmet on his head. It needed but a glance to tell both boys who stood before them.

He came a few steps nearer and made a deep courtesy. "The enchanted princess awaits her deliverer," he said. "Which one of you will undertake the hazardous enterprise?"

"I will!" cried John, in eager accents.

The dwarf immediately led forth a snow-white steed, and stood holding its golden bridle.

"Don't go, I beg of you, John," pleaded Harry fearfully. But John was already in

the saddle. The magic horse sprang neighing in the air, and with tail and mane flying, sped swiftly into the forest. A shining golden beetle flew ahead of them, as though guiding them along. John turned around for a last look at Harry, and saw him still standing under the gold tree. Then boy and tree disappeared from view.

It was a glorious ride. John sat in his saddle as securely as though he were on his accustomed school-chair, instead of a horse. He had to laugh when he thought that only one short hour ago, he had been sighing over Cornelius Nepos, and trembling at the thought of Dr. Cudgel. For, in the meantime, the little school-boy in short jacket had grown into a fine-looking horseman, with long coat and vest, and sword and spurs.

Thus he sped through the enchanted forest. At length his horse set up a friendly

neighing. The forest grew lighter and lighter. A few steps more, and horse and rider stopped before a marble palace. Bright banners floated from its gleaming turrets, and bugles and trumpets sounded a glad welcome. And best of all, on the balcony stood the enchanted princess, waving a snowy kerchief.

She resembled his neighbor, Helene, with whom he had played, when he was a boy at school; only she was larger, and a thousand times more beautiful. John now sprang out of the saddle, and hastened up the steps, his spurs jingling merrily as he went.

There was a man at the castle gate, the seneschal, no doubt. But how strangely familiar he seemed to our hero. Suddenly, he advanced toward the newcomer, stretched out his hand, and gave poor John a ringing box on the ear, crying, "Fell asleep, did

you, you sluggard? Wait! I'll attend to you."

The enchantment came to an untimely end, and John found himself once more at the ink-stained table, with Cornelius Nepos and his Latin dictionary close at hand. Across from him, Harry was still busy with his figures, while nearby stood Dr. Cudgel, staring at him through his glasses, in the most forbidding manner.

When their study period came to an end, and the boys found themselves at length in the garden, enjoying their afternoon lunch under the shade of the lilacs, John told what a wonderful dream he had had.

"How strange!" cried Harry, at its conclusion. "I myself had the self-same dream, only it ended differently."

"How did yours end? Go on, tell me all about it!" begged John, breathless with excitement.

"I did not see the enchanted castle, but my dream was identical with yours till we came to the gold tree. Then you mounted the snow-white steed and rode away to release the princess, while I remained behind, shook the tree, and filled all my pockets with gold leaves. Then that stupid tutor woke me, and my glory had an end."

"Harry," cried John earnestly, grasping his hand; "believe me, when two people have the selfsame dream, it is sure to come true. That dream was a prophecy. You mark my words!" Then the boys finished their lunch, and went off to play ball.

"And was the dream fulfilled?" you will ask. Indeed it was, and even to the smallest detail! John became a poet, and rode his Pegasus through the green woods of poesy, while Harry, who in the dream shook the magic tree and pocketed the golden leaves, became his publisher.

JONAH AND THE CHILD OF FORTUNE

In a little village of Germany there dwelt a young man who was most unfortunate in everything he undertook to do. His father had been called Jonah, so Jonah was likewise his name. His parents died while he was very young, and he went to live with a tall scrawny aunt, who assumed the task of rearing him in the way he should go.

Now spare the rod and spoil the child was no part of her creed, and she punished him religiously, on general principles, every time she returned home from early Mass. Since never a day passed that she did not go to early Mass, you may judge how sad was his plight.

Oh, he was very, very unfortunate! If he chanced to lift a glass, it was always sure to fall with a crash; and as sure as he stooped to pick up the pieces, just so sure was he to cut his finger.

Thus he fared in all things. Bye and bye, there came a day upon which the scrawny aunt was gathered to her last rest, and he planted as many bushes and trees as her grave would hold. It almost seemed as if he were bent upon heaping over her all the many sticks she had broken on his back.

Yet his evil star was still in the ascendancy. At length he fell into a state of deep melancholy, and he resolved to wander forth into the wide, wide world.

"Worse cannot befall me," he thought, "and perchance I may better my condition. At least, there's no harm in trying."

So he put all his available funds in his pockets and wandered out of the city gate. Outside he paused awhile on the stone bridge, and leaned over the railing. He looked down at the waves which were breaking in foam against the pillars of the bridge, and his heart was heavy.

It seemed to him not altogether right for him to leave the city, where he had dwelt so long. Perhaps he would not have had the courage to tear himself away had not the wind suddenly blown his hat from his head. It fell into the river, of course, and before he fully awoke from his reverie, it had drifted under the bridge, and was already dancing up and down the waves on the other side of the stream.

And every time it rose on the crest of a wave, it seemed to call to him mockingly, "Good-bye, Jonah, I am off! You may stay at home, if you wish!" Then Jonah

shook the dust of his native town from his feet in anger, and went on his way, without a hat.

Occasionally he met other wanderers, singing and joking along the way. They invited him to join company with them, but each time he shook his head sadly and said: "Nay, I am not fit company for anyone, and would bring you small luck. Indeed, I am called Jonah."

No sooner did they hear his name, than they became silent and embarrassed, and proceeded upon their way with such haste that they left a cloud of dust in their wake.

Toward evening he came to an inn, and sat in a lonely corner of the dining-room, with his head in his hands. Before him, on the table, stood a tin tankard filled with wine, untouched. Finally, observing his deep dejection, the innkeeper's daughter crossed over to his side, and touched him

on the shoulder. He started as if shot. She asked him why he was so sad, and he told her his story.

As soon as she heard his name, her compassion took sudden flight, and she retreated to her spinning-wheel and left him alone with his thoughts. And thus it was, where'er he went. After he had wandered about for a few weeks, without really knowing whither he was going, he chanced one day upon a wonderful large garden, enclosed by a high gilded railing. Through this fence he could perceive many very high old trees and thick, low hedges, as well as open stretches of greensward.

Babbling and purling over its pebbles, a little brook wound in and out among the trees, with many little bridges spanning it. Tame deer and gentle does walked up and down the paths of yellow sand. They paused beside the fence, and stretched

their heads through the iron railing to eat the bread he held in his hand.

In the centre of the garden, a stately palace towered amid the trees. Its silver turrets, from which bright flags and banners were streaming, glistened in the sun. He strolled along the fence till he came to a large open gate, which seemed to invite him to enter.

A long shady avenue led directly to the castle. Utter silence reigned on all sides, but near the gate, he espied a sign.

"Aha!" thought Jonah to himself, "that is always the way. If one ever does reach a peaceful spot where an open gateway invites one to rest, there is always sure to be a sign posted somewhere, 'No trespassing allowed.' "

But, to his great surprise, on drawing nearer, he saw that for once he had been mistaken. For this sign read: "No one is permitted to weep in this garden."

"What a foolish inscription," cried Jonah, drawing out his handkerchief and wiping his eyes, to make sure they had not deceived him. Then, too, if it really read that way, he was so accustomed to weeping that he could not be sure that a stray tear or two were not yet lurking in a corner of his eyes.

When he had assured himself that his eyes were really dry, he entered the garden. The stately avenue rather embarrassed him with its air of elegance. So he chose a little side-path leading between high hedges of jasmine and roses.

He followed this until he reached a little wood, whose many paths all wound to a hill, on the crest of which he espied a most beautiful Princess.

In her lap lay a golden crown, upon which she was blowing her breath. Then she rubbed it with a corner of her silken

robe, and laughed in glee when she beheld its polished surface. Then she smoothed her long hair, and again set the crown on her head.

Poor Jonah was stricken dumb with fear when he beheld her. His heart beat so loud that it well-nigh suffocated him. Whatever should he do? He dropped down behind a bush. It was a barberry bush, and one twig lay squarely across his face. There was quite a breeze stirring, and as the twig swayed lightly to and fro, a thorn kept tickling the end of his nose.

There was no escaping the consequences — he had to sneeze aloud. The Princess turned in sudden fright, and beheld the luckless Jonah cowering behind the bush.

"What do you want?" she cried. "Why are you hiding there? Do you wish to rob me, or are you afraid of me?"

Thereupon, trembling like an aspen leaf,

he emerged from his hiding-place behind the bush. The Princess took a look at him.

"You mean me no harm, I see," she said, laughing. "Come, sit here beside me. My companions have all left me, and I am lonely. Perhaps you know some pretty tale to tell me, or one to make me laugh. But good gracious! how sad you look! What ails you? If you did not make such a gloomy face, you would be quite good-looking."

"Well, if you really wish me to, I will sit down for a moment," said Jonah. "But, pray, who are you? I have never, in all my life before, beheld anyone half so beautiful!"

"I am the Princess Good Fortune, and this is my father's garden."

"What are you doing here, all by yourself?" he asked.

"Oh, I feed my deer, and polish my crown" —

"And then?"

"Then I feed my gold-fish."

"And when you are through feeding them?"

"Oh, then my companions come back, and we sing and dance and laugh."

"What a life, what a happy life!" sighed Jonah. "But tell me, is this what you do every day?"

"Yes, every single day," she answered. "But come, it's my turn to ask questions. Who are you, and what is your name?"

"Please do not ask me that, beautiful Princess," he begged. "I am the most unfortunate of mortals, and have the most detestable name under the sun."

"An ugly name is a misfortune," she replied. "We have a man here who is called Duckweed, and another is named

Grease-Spot. Is your name anything like that?"

"No," he replied sadly. "I am Jonah."

"Jonah? That's enough to make one die a-laughing," she declared. "Can't you take a different name? I will think up a pretty name, suitable for you, and will ask my father to give you permission to bear it. My father can do anything he pleases, for he is King of this land. But, mind, I will do it only on condition that you wear a glad face.

"Take your hand away from your face, and stop pulling down the corners of your mouth. You really have a nice mouth, but you will spoil it completely if you keep on like this. There! Now you do look a little more sensible. But come, tell me, why are you always so sad? Now I am always happy, and everybody with whom I talk seems so, except you."

"Why am I so sad?" repeated Jonah. "Because I have always been sad, all my life long. Why should I be anything but sad? All I have ever had has been misfortune. You say you are always joyful? How did you begin being so?"

"Oh, I had a fairy godmother," she made reply, "for whom my father once did a great service. When I was christened, she took me in her arms, kissed me upon the brow, and said, "You shall always be joyful, and make the whole world rejoice. And if, by any chance, a sad mortal gazes on you, he shall straightway forget his woes. You shall be called Good Fortune.' Evidently, no fairy ever kissed you, Sir Jonah."

"No, indeed," lamented poor Jonah, "never!"

Thereupon the Princess became very thoughtful. She gazed steadily at him with her large blue eyes, until he became

quite uncomfortable. At length she murmured, "I wonder if it must always be a fairy. A princess has some power, also. I do believe I'll try it." Aloud, she said, "Come here. Kneel down. You are far too tall." She bent down and kissed him, then ran laughingly away.

Before he could collect his wits, she had disappeared from view. He arose very slowly. He had a strange sensation, as though he had just awakened from a dream. And yet it had been no dream, for a wonderful happiness was beginning to steal over his heart.

"If only I had my hat," he sighed, "I would toss it up into the air for joy." Then he added, "No doubt it would trill a roundelay and soar away on skylark pinions. That's what I feel like doing myself. Hip, hip, hurrah! I really believe I'm getting merry. Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

He picked a bouquet of flowers, and wandered out upon the highway, singing at the top of his voice. As soon as he reached the next town, he bought a red velvet doublet slashed with white satin, and a hat with a long, trailing white feather. He looked at himself in the glass and said, "Jonah's my name, is it? Well, we'll see. Perhaps I'll be given another name ere long. But it will have to be a very pretty one, or I'll not take it."

Then he mounted a horse, and put spurs to it, that it might prance merrily, and continued his journey.

Meantime, after giving Jonah the kiss, Princess Good-Fortune had run and run at full speed. After a while, she ran more and more slowly, and at last she sat down on a bench not far from the castle, and began to weep bitterly.

When her friends returned, they found

her weeping. They endeavored to console her, but could not. So in great fright, they ran to the King, and told him that a great misfortune had befallen the land — Princess Good-Fortune was in the garden crying.

The King turned pale with fright when he heard it, and sprang quickly down the steps, into the garden. And there, sure enough, he found the Princess on a bench, crying as though her heart would break. Her golden crown was lying on her lap, covered with the many tears she had shed, and glistening in the sun, as though it were set with a thousand diamonds.

The King tried in vain to comfort her; she was inconsolable. So he led her into the castle, and hastened to despatch messengers far and wide over the land, in search of beautiful and costly gifts to lavish on her. All to no purpose, for she remained sad and sorrowful, and though often pressed

by her father, as to what had occurred to so grieve her, would give him no satisfaction.

The King was very persistent, and kept on questioning her every day. And at last, one day, in sheer desperation, the Princess broke down and told him all that had happened. The King held up his hands in horror. Had she, in truth, taken leave of her senses, to have so far forgotten her dignity? He could scarcely believe his ears.

Then he insisted upon being told why she had done such an unmaidenly thing. She replied that she pitied Jonah so, she did it to see whether she could not make him a little less unhappy.

"A pretty reason for a Princess to kiss the first hatless, ragged vagabond who crosses her path!" stormed her father. "And named Jonah, to boot! Did anyone ever hear the equal of such folly? But he shall pay for it," the King raged

on, "and dearly! I'll catch him yet, and when I do he shall be beheaded. That is the very least punishment I can inflict for so dire an offense." Thereupon he commanded his horsemen to scatter in all directions, to search for Jonah.

"If you come across a young vagabond, who looks as sad as if the mice had eaten his last bite of bread and butter away from him, and is without a hat, fetch him thither at once, for he it is that you are seeking."

The horsemen sped in all directions, like chaff before a wind. Some few of them passed Jonah on the way, but as he was clad in elegant apparel, and mounted on a prancing steed, it is not at all strange that they did not recognize him.

Others hastened back to the palace with prisoners of all descriptions, none of whom was the one so eagerly awaited. Finally the King became angry at the stupidity of

his messengers, and scored them all roundly. But the Princess remained as sad as ever, during all this time, and came to the table every day with pale cheeks and tear-stained eyes.

The King could do naught but gaze in compassion at his once beautiful daughter, and soup and roast grew cold, unheeded. Week followed week. Then there came a day when the whole courtyard rang with a sudden commotion. But before the King could reach the window to ascertain the cause, two horsemen burst into the room, with the unfortunate Jonah between them.

His hands were bound behind his back, but his face fairly beamed, as if nothing more to his liking could have befallen him. He made a low courtesy, then drew himself proudly erect, and stood before the King, awaiting his pleasure.

"We've caught the fine bird at last, your

Majesty," said the elder of the captors. "But he certainly must have changed his plumage in between-times, for your description fits him as one's fist fits one's eyes. We never would have found him, had not the stupid dolt, in a fit of bragging, told us the story himself, while we were all stopping at an inn.

"And what do you suppose he did, when we captured and bound him? Just laughed and sang and danced for joy! And when we set him on his horse and mounted ours on either side of him, to gallop thither, what think you he did? Scolded and raged because we rode not more swiftly. He acted for all the world as though he could scarcely wait to be beheaded. If he is the saddest mortal in Christendom, your Majesty, I should indeed like to see the merriest!"

Thereupon the King crossed over to where Jonah stood, folded his arms and

said: "So you are the man who had the temerity to allow a Princess to kiss you!"

"Yes, your Majesty, and I have been the happiest man on earth ever since," laughed the other.

"Lock him up in a dungeon!" roared the King. "To-morrow he shall be executed!"

The horsemen hastened to lead him to the dungeon tower, and the King walked up and down his chamber, lost in thought.

"What a terrible affair!" he mused. "I have the rascal, it is true, and he shall die to-morrow. But will that restore my beloved daughter's lost happiness?" Then he stole softly to her chamber door, to listen at the keyhole. But the sounds of muffled sobs that reached his ear made him shake his head sadly, and retreat to his own room.

After thinking it all over once more, he

sent for his secret counsellor. To him he imparted the whole story of the Princess' folly. The latter thought it all over carefully ere he offered his advice. At length he said: "I know not whether it will prove effectual, but at any rate, it can do no harm to try.

"It is known that this Jonah was formerly very sad, yet is now the Prince of Jollity. Also that our beautiful Princess, who was formerly always merry, is now inconsolably sad. Therefore, it is plainly evident there was magic in the kiss, which worked the change. Clearly, the kiss is to blame for it all. Likewise, there can be but one remedy. Jonah must give the Princess back her kiss, O your Majesty!"

But the King waxed wroth, and declared such a proceeding quite impossible, and quite contrary to all the customs of his race.

"Your Majesty must regard the entire

affair as an official act, therefore a state secret. Then all will be well, once more, and no one will dare breathe a word about it."

After arguing the matter at some length, the King was won over. So he donned his robes of state, and called all his knights and courtiers to the presence-chamber. Guards were at once despatched to the dungeon to lead the prisoner thither.

As soon as he was seated on the throne, the King sent for his daughter, without telling her why her presence was desired. She came at once and took her place at his side. Perfect silence reigned, until the door opened to admit Jonah.

The King addressed the culprit as follows: "You shall be beheaded to-morrow, as I have already said. But before that event takes place, you will now, this very instant, and in the presence of my assembled court,

return to my daughter the kiss she so rashly bestowed upon you."

"If such is your desire, O King," returned Jonah, "I will most gladly comply with your request. And were it possible for mortal man to be more happy than I am at the present moment, no doubt I shall speedily become so."

"We shall see," interrupted the King, harshly; "it is just possible that there may be a mistake in your calculations this time."

But Jonah, his face wreathed in smiles, did not appear to be listening. Instead, he crossed over to where the Princess stood, took her tenderly in his arms and bestowed a rapturous kiss upon her lips. "By the order of the King," he whispered, laughingly. She clasped her arms around his neck, and there they stood, lost in ecstasy.

"Well, my daughter, are you happy once more?" broke in the King.

"A little bit, dear father," answered the Princess, "but you know it will not be for long."

"Yes, yes," returned the latter, "I see. If the scheme had been a success, he would have become sorrowful again, by this time. But there he stands, as smiling and as unabashed as ever. Whatever shall we do?"

Then the Princess dropped her eyes and softly answered, "I know, dear father, and I shall tell you, but it must be told in secret."

Thereupon the King retired into the ante-chamber, and what took place there, none ever knew. Only when they returned, the King led her straight over to Jonah, placed her hand in his, and spake to the assembled court: "Courtiers and friends, it is useless to struggle against Fate. God's will be done! This is my dear son, who will reign in my stead, when I die. I bid you give him welcome."

And so Jonah became a prince and went to live in the stately palace, and he gave the Princess so many kisses that in time she became even happier than before. And he was no longer Jonah. No, indeed! Instead she called him by the prettiest names she could think of, a different one each day, and each one lovelier than the last.

THE WATER-SPRITE'S FIDDLE-STICK

There was once a little boy named Frederick, who had neither father nor mother. He was such a beautiful child, that when he played on the street outside his door, people stopped to look at him and ask, "To whom does the little one belong?"

Then the surly old woman who had raised him on thin broth and plentiful scoldings, would answer, "He is a poor little orphan, and the best thing for him would be if his Heavenly Father would see fit to take him home."

But Frederick had no longings for the kingdom of Heaven. He was very well satisfied with things as they were down here, and he throve like the red thistle be-

hind his foster mother's house. He had no playmates. When the other boys of the village built bark canoes, and sent them floating down the mill-pond, or romped together in the hay, Frederick sat in the meadows, imitating the whistle of the different birds.

One day, while engaged in this pleasing occupation, he was approached by old Nick, a bird-catcher by trade. He was greatly impressed by the boy's beauty and cleverness, and made overtures of friendship. From that time on, the two were inseparable, and could be frequently seen before the hut of the bird-catcher, sitting close together, and chatting like two old companions-in-arms.

Nick not only knew how to relate wonderful tales of the forest, but he also could play on the fiddle, and undertook to instruct Frederick in this art, having first presented

him with an old fiddle, which he had mended for him.

His pupil certainly did him credit, for before a month had passed, Frederick could play several popular songs quite well indeed. The old bird-catcher was highly elated, and predicted that if God spared his life, Frederick would some day be first violin at church consecrations.

When the lad was fifteen years old, all the neighbors met together in solemn conclave to hold discourse over him. They decided that it was about time for him to learn something properly useful, with which to earn his living.

When they asked him what he would like to be, he answered, "A musician." Whereupon the good people held up their hands in horror. Then from among them a man who was held in high regard stepped forward, grasped the boy's hand, and said,

with dignity, "I will try to make something worthy out of him."

Then all the neighbors crowded around him, and congratulated him, for they considered him very fortunate to have found such a master. He was a man of no little importance. He shaved the peasants' hair and beards, bled the fever patients, pulled out bad teeth, and occasionally good ones, by mistake. He was the village barber, but people always referred to him as the doctor, for in those days the village barber was also a surgeon and a dentist, as you may perhaps have heard before.

On the same day, Frederick entered the house of his employer, and began his duties by fetching his master's beer from the alehouse. Gradually he learned how to make lather and strop a razor, and to do all the other things pertaining to his profession.

His master was pleased with him in every

respect except his music. For he would persist in practicing zealously every spare moment he found. This according to the barber's view was a mere waste of time, since music belonged to the profitless arts.

Thus two years passed by. Then there came a day upon which Frederick was to make a test of his skill as apprentice. If it met with his master's approval he would become a journeyman, and might start out into the world, to seek his fortune while traveling. The test consisted of shaving his master's beard satisfactorily, and that was no joke, I can assure you.

The eventful day came round. The barber sat in the chair, a white towel around his neck, and leaned back. Frederick lathered his stout double-chin, stropped the razor and began his task.

But suddenly, outside the door were heard the sound of violin and flute. A

bear-leader with a dancing bear was passing that way. When the apprentice heard the music, his hand involuntarily twitched, and left a long, bloody gash from his ear to his nose, across his master's cheek.

Alas! poor Frederick! The chair upon which the barber sat was thrown hastily backward onto the floor. In a raging fury the bleeding man sprang upon his pupil and gave him a ringing box on the ear. Then he threw open the door, pointed to it, and cried, "Go to the cuckoo!"

Thereupon Frederick packed his various belongings, took his fiddle under his arm, and went to the cuckoo. Now the cuckoo lived in an oak tree in the forest, and, as luck would have it, chanced to be at home when Frederick called. He patiently heard the young man's story through to the end, then shook his wings and said:

"Young friend, if I wished to help every-

one who is sent to me, I should have my hands more than full. Times are very hard, and I am glad that I have been able to dispose of my own children tolerably well. I have put my eldest son out to board in the family of wagtails. Neighbor Redstart has taken my second son into his house, while my third, who is a girl, has been adopted by an old hedge-sparrow. My friend, the wren, is taking care of my two youngest ones. As for myself, I must keep on the go from morn till night to make both ends meet. For the last fourteen days I have subsisted entirely upon hairy caterpillars, and I am sure your stomach could never stand such food. No, sorry though I am to say so, I can do nothing to help you."

Thereat Frederick hung his head sorrowfully, said good-bye, and went away. He had not gone far, however, when the bird

called after him: "Stop, Frederick, perhaps I can help you, after all. An idea has just occurred to me. Come along."

Saying which he spread his wings, and flew along ahead of Frederick. The latter had some difficulty in following his leader, since the undergrowth was very dense, and thorn hedges were plentiful along the way. At last the sunlight was visible between the trunks of the trees, and shone sparkling on the water.

"Here we are," said the cuckoo, alighting on an alder bough. Before them lay a dark green fish-pond, which was fed by a foaming waterfall. Reeds and yellow irises grew along its bank, and snowy water-lilies, with their broad green leaves, floated on its surface.

"Now watch out," said the clever bird. "When the sun sinks, and the spray of the waterfall gleams with the seven colors of

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the rainbow, then the water-sprite will come up from the bottom of the pond, where he dwells in a crystal palace, and sit on the shore. But do not be afraid. On the contrary, speak to him, and the rest will follow of itself."

Frederick gratefully thanked the cuckoo, who winged his swift flight back into the forest. When the spray of the waterfall gleamed with the seven colors of the rainbow, sure enough! the water sprite came up from his crystal palace.

He had on a red coat and a white collar. His hair was green, and hung down to his shoulders in a tangled mane. He seated himself on a rock, which reared itself above the glassy surface of the water, and let his feet dangle in the pond, while he began to comb his hair with his ten fingers.

It was a tedious task, for tangled in its thick masses were seaweed, duckweed, and

little snail-shells, and while he was combing it, he made a very wry face.

"This is exactly the right time for my interview," said Frederick to himself.

Thereupon, he screwed up his courage and emerged from the alder hedge, where he had until now been hiding. He lifted his hat, and said in his most polite way, "Good evening, Master Sprite."

But no sooner had his voice broken the stillness, than the sprite plumped into the water and dove beneath like a frightened frog. In a little while he ventured to stretch his head out of the water and ask in no friendly tones, "Well, what do you want?"

"I am an experienced barber," began Frederick, "and with your kind permission I should like to comb your hair for you. Indeed, I should consider it a great honor if you would allow me to do so."

Thereupon the sprite climbed out of the stream, and exclaimed rejoicingly, "Indeed, you come at a most opportune moment. What trouble and vexation have I not had with my hair since my aunt, the Lorelei, so basely deserted me. And after all I have done for her, the ungrateful creature. One morning she disappeared, and my golden comb was also missing. Now, I am told, she sits on a rock in the Rhine, making love to a boatman in a little skiff. My golden comb will soon be gone."

With these words he took a seat on a stone, and Frederick drew forth his shaving outfit, fastened a white towel round his neck, and combed and oiled his hair till it was as smooth as silk. Then he parted it in the middle, from his forehead to his neck, took off the towel and scraped a sweeping bow. The sprite got up, and looked with approval at his image in the water.

"What do you charge?" he asked.

Frederick was about to make his usual reply, "As much as you wish to pay," when fortunately it occurred to him that there is no time like the present, and that one should strike while the iron is hot. So he cleared his throat, and began the story of his life.

"And so you would like to become a musician?" asked the sprite, when Frederick was through. "Well, take your fiddle and let me hear you play."

Whereupon the young man took his fiddle, tuned the strings, and played his best piece, and as he finished, he looked expectantly at the sprite.

The latter merely grinned and made a wry face. Then he reached among the reeds and drew forth a violin and bow, which he adjusted and began to play upon. Such playing poor Frederick had never

heard. At first it sounded like the wind sighing among the reeds, then like the raging of a waterfall, and last of all, like a gently flowing stream.

The birds in the branches overhead hushed their singing; the bees ceased their humming, and even the fishes raised their heads out of the pond to listen to the sweet strains. Tears came into Frederick's eyes, and he raised his hands entreatingly, and said, "Please, Master Sprite, take me as your pupil!"

"That is impossible," replied the sprite. "It is also unnecessary. For if you will but leave me your comb, I promise you that you shall become the greatest musician the world has ever known — a violinist without a rival.

Frederick rejoiced. "You may have my entire outfit, if you wish," he cried, impulsively, reaching it to him as he spoke. The

sprite grasped it eagerly, and instantly sank beyond view.

"Wait a moment, wait a moment," cried the poor young man. But he might as well have spared his breath, for no ripple stirred the placid surface of the water. He waited one hour, he waited two, but neither saw nor heard anything of the sprite.

Poor Frederick sighed deeply. It was plainly evident to him that the false sprite had basely betrayed him. But what was that lying at his feet, as he turned to go — whither, he knew not? It was nothing more nor less than the sprite's fiddle stick, lying there at the water's edge! He stooped to pick it up, and as he did so it sent an electric shock from his finger-tips to his very shoulder-blades. And what was more, it seemed to impel him to try it on his fiddle.

He started to play a popular air entitled,

"What Shall a Poor Fellow Do?" but no sooner had his hand grasped the bow, than an unseen power seemed to guide his fingers, and the strings breathed forth such sweet slivery strains as he had never before heard, except the time the sprite played his violin.

The birds came fluttering thither, and settled on the boughs to listen; the fishes swam to the surface of the pond, and the timid deer and does came out of the forest and stood near him to listen, with eyes that seemed almost human in their intelligence.

And Frederick knew not how it came to pass, but every beautiful thought which came surging through his mind and soul found instant expression through his hand, and rang out in tones of piercing sweetness on his old brown fiddle. Even the sprite emerged from his crystal palace, to nod

approvingly at Frederick from the surface of the water. Then he disappeared to be seen no more.

And Frederick, still playing as in a dream, emerged from the forest, and wandered for many years through all the kingdoms of the earth, playing before kings and emperors. Gold was fairly showered upon him, and he might have become a very wealthy man, had he not been so truly a musician. But as we all know, no true artists ever accumulate fortunes.

He had given away his shaving outfit, and therefore he was compelled to let his hair grow long, like Samson's. The other musicians observed this, and soon began to imitate him, which did not disturb him in the least, since imitation is the sincerest flattery.

And from that time to the present day, musicians have affected long, bushy hair.

THE DESERTED GRAVE

The churchyard, in which the children were wont to play, lay high up on the green mountain slope. The village to which it belonged lay so high above the wooded valley, that it was often hidden from view by the clouds, as one passed by, on the blue stream below. The churchyard, however, lay so high above the village, that its many black crosses towered up into the very blue of the heavens.

It was considerable trouble for the villagers to carry their dead up to the churchyard, for the path was steep and stony, until one reached the grassy meadows where the graves lay. Yet they did it willingly, for the mountain folks cannot live in a valley. A valley seems as dark and narrow to them

as a deep cellar would to us. Much less would they bury their dead there.

No, indeed! Their dead must be buried high up on the mountain, where one can see far out over the land and down into the valley below, where the ships sail past. In one corner of the churchyard was a neglected grave, upon which grew only grass and a few wild flowers which nobody had ever planted. For it belonged to an old bachelor who had left neither wife nor children to look after him.

He had come thither from foreign realms, none knew exactly where. Every morning he would climb to the top of the mountain, where he would sit for hours. But he had lived only a short time, and had been buried in the spot most dear to him.

He must have had a name, though none had ever heard it. In the church records his death was registered with three crosses

followed by the words, "An old bachelor, died on such and such a day, of such and such a month, in the year of our Lord, so and so." All of which was little enough.

But the two children, whose father was the sexton, were extremely fond of this particular grave. Probably because they were permitted to play and walk upon it as much as they pleased, while they dared not so much as touch one of the other graves.

These were all carefully tended; the grass was always freshly cut and as smooth as velvet. Then there were all kinds of flowers growing on them, which the sexton watered daily with great pains, since he had to carry the water up from the village. There were also wreaths and flowers tied with bright ribbons on many of the graves.

One day the children were playing as usual in their favorite spot. The little boy

was kneeling before the grave, looking with great satisfaction at a hole which he had dug in its side with his little hands.

"Katherine," he called, "our house is finished. I have plastered it with bright colored pebbles, and strewn flower petals over it. Come, I'll be the father, and you the mother."

Katherine came running. "Good morning, father."

"Good morning, mother," he answered. "How are our children this morning?"

"John," exclaimed the little maid, "you play far too quickly! I have no children as yet, but I will soon find a few." Saying which, she disappeared among the graves and bushes, and soon returned with both hands full of snails.

"See, father," she cried, all dimples, "I have now seven children, seven lovely little snail children."

"Then you would better put them to bed at once, as it is already late," returned John.

The little girl plucked some leaves, which she laid in the hole, placed the snails upon them, and covered each one over with a green leaf.

"Now you keep still, John," she called out. "I must sing the children to sleep, and I must do it all by myself. The father never helps sing the children to sleep. You can go on with your work till I'm through."

So John went away, and Katherine sang a lullaby in a sweet little voice. But of a sudden one leaf began to stir, and a snail stuck its little head out of its shell. The little one tapped its head with her finger and said, "Just you wait, Gustave, you are always the naughty one! Early this morning you would not let me comb your hair. Will you go to sleep at once?"

Then she went on with her singing, and sure enough, before she was through, they were all fast asleep. At least, they were perfectly quiet. John did not return immediately, so the little maiden stole away, and wandered about the churchyard, in search of more snails.

She gathered a great number in her apron, and then returned to the grave, where she found John awaiting her.

"Father," she called to him, "I have found a hundred more."

"Listen, wife," returned the small boy, sensibly, "a hundred children are a great many indeed. We have only one doll-plate and a couple of doll-forks. How in the world are the children going to eat? Besides, no mother ever has one hundred children, and there are not one hundred names. Take them back again."

"No, John," said the little one, "a hun-

dred children are very nice indeed. I need every one of them."

Just then the sexton's wife appeared with two large slices of bread and butter, for it was vesper time and they had had nothing to eat since noon. She kissed the children, sat them upon the grave, and told them not to get butter on their clean clothes. So they sat as still as mice, and ate their bread and butter.

Now the dead man, lying so quietly in his grave below, had been listening to it all; for the dead can hear every word which is spoken at their graves.

It recalled the time when he himself had been a child. There had been another, also, a little girl with whom he played. Then he thought of a later time, when he had seen her once again — this time a full-grown woman. After that, he had never heard of her again, for he had gone on his own way.

And indeed, it could not have been a very nice way, for the more he thought of it, and the longer he listened to the innocent prattle of the children, the sadder and sadder he grew. At last he began to weep. And when their mother sat the children on the grave, directly over his breast, the more and more he wept. He tried to stretch forth his arms, to clasp them to his heart, but could not.

Not a muscle could he move, for over him lay six feet of earth, and six feet of earth is a heavy weight, I assure you, especially over one's heart. So he cried and cried, ever harder and harder, even after the mother had taken her children away and put them to bed.

And what do you think was the end of his tears? You will never believe it, I am sure. But the next morning, when the sexton went through the churchyard, he

found a little spring gushing forth from the deserted grave. It was the tears the dead man had shed, and they bubbled directly out of the little hole which the children had dug for their playhouse.

How the sexton rejoiced! No longer would he have to carry water up the steep path from the village. So he made a little channel for the spring, and lined its banks with large confining stones, to keep it in its channel.

And ever afterwards he watered the graves from the new spring, and the flowers seemed to bloom far brighter and more beautiful than before. He took no pains, however, with the grave from which the water gushed forth, for it was only an old neglected one, about which there was no one to ask.

But despite this fact, the mountain wild-flowers grew more abundantly here than in

any other spot, making it fully as beautiful as any other grave. And here the children loved to sit, through the long summer hours, building mill-dams or floating paper boats on the sparkling water.

THE WISHING RING

A young man, who had formerly been unprosperous as an innkeeper, and was now a farmer, sat upon his plow one day, and rested for a moment, while he wiped the sweat from his brow. An old witch happened to pass by, and asked, "Why do you work so hard, when it avails you naught? Journey straight ahead for two days, until you reach a pine tree in the forest, which stands apart by itself, and towers above every other tree around. Cut it down and your fortune will be made."

The farmer needed no second bidding, but straightway shouldered his axe, and started on his quest. And exactly two days later he came upon the tree. He hastened to fell it, and no sooner had it crashed to the

ground than from its topmost boughs there fell a nest.

Two eggs rolled out of the nest and broke upon the ground; and as they broke, a young eagle emerged from one, while from the other fell a ring of gold. The eagle grew before his very eyes, until it attained one-half the height of an ordinary man. Then it spread its wings as though it were anxious to try them, soared a little distance from the ground, and cried:

"You have given me my freedom. Take the ring which was in the other egg as a token of my thanks. It is a wishing ring. If you turn it round your finger and make a wish, your wish will be immediately fulfilled. But, remember, there is only one wish in the ring. Therefore, consider well before you wish, that you may have no regrets later on."

Thereupon the eagle soared high in the

air, circled slowly above the farmer's head, and then winged its way straight as an arrow toward the east. The man took the ring, put it on his finger, and hastened homeward.

Toward evening he reached a little town, where he chanced to see a goldsmith standing in front of his shop. Many costly rings were on sale. The farmer showed his ring and asked what it was worth.

"A fig," replied the goldsmith.

At that the farmer laughed loud and merrily, and assured him it was a wishing ring, and worth more than all the rings together, which he had on sale.

Now the goldsmith was a base deceiver, and as tricky as he was deceitful. So he invited the farmer to stay over night with him, saying: "To entertain a man like you, with such a gem in his possession, is sure to bring one good luck." He entertained

him with his choicest wines and smoothest words, and put him to bed in his best chamber.

But in the dead of night, while the farmer lay sunk in sleep, the goldsmith stole softly into his room, and carefully removed the wishing ring from his finger. Then, just as carefully, he replaced it with an ordinary ring, which to all outward appearances was identical with the one he stole.

The next day, he could scarcely wait for the farmer to take his departure. He awoke him very early, saying: "You have a long journey ahead of you, so it will be to your advantage to get an early start."

As soon as he had gone, the jeweller locked his shop, hastened into his own room, where no prying eyes might see him, and locked and bolted the door. Then he stood in the centre of the room, turned the ring round on his finger, and cried, "I

want a hundred thousand dollars immediately!"

Scarcely had the words left his lips ere it began to rain silver dollars. Down they poured, hard and shining, like water in a trough. They struck his head, his breast, and shoulders. He began to shriek with pain, and sprang to the door to escape. But before he could reach it, he was felled to the ground, and lay there faint and bleeding. And still the dollars came, like a veritable silver hail-storm, until the floor collapsed beneath the strain. It caved in, and the poor goldsmith with all his wealth fell into the dark cellar. And still the dollars continued to fall upon his lifeless form, until a hundred thousand had descended.

The neighbors heard the noise and came running thither. And when they beheld the goldsmith lying dead beneath all those

hard shining dollars, they said, "Verily, it it a great misfortune to have too much money fall to one's lot. Then came the jeweller's heirs, who divided it all up among themselves, and so, in the end, it had availed him naught.

Meanwhile the farmer proceeded on his way home, with a heart full of rejoicing. He showed the ring to his wife, and said, "This time it cannot fail! Our fortune is made. But we will think it all over carefully, ere we decide upon our wish."

His wife was ready with her advice. "Suppose we wish for that triangular piece of land adjoining ours. We have always wanted it."

"It's not worth while," returned her husband. "If we have a little patience and work diligently, we can soon save enough to buy those few acres."

So they worked most industriously for a

year, and never before had they had such a plentiful harvest. They were not only able to buy the coveted piece of land, but they even had a little money left over.

"See," said the man with great joy, "we not only have the land we wished, but our wish itself is intact."

"Yes, indeed," replied his wife, "and a good thing it is, for now we can buy a horse and cow."

But he only jingled the money in his pockets and asked, "Why should we waste our precious wish on such beggarly trifles? We need only work hard a little longer, and we can soon earn our horse and cow."

And sure enough, at the end of the second year, both horse and cow stood in their stalls. Then the man rubbed his hands together in content and said, "Well, our wish is spared us for another year, and we have everything for which we longed.

Haven't we had the most wonderful good luck?"

But his wife begged him earnestly to make up his mind what he wanted, and to wish for it. He steadfastly refused to waste his wish, when they could so easily earn what they needed. At length she became angry and exclaimed, "I hardly recognize you, now-a-days! Formerly you did nothing but grumble, and pity yourself, and wish for everything under the sun. Now when it is really in your power to have anything you please, you hem and haw and make excuses, and are content with everything that come along. Why you are letting our best years slip by. You might be a count, a king, or even an emperor, with his coffers filled with gold. But no! You can't make up your mind what to choose!"

"Oh, stop your everlasting urging and nagging," rejoined her husband. "We are

both still young, and life is long. Remember, there is but one wish in the ring, and that is soon used up. The time may come when we shall be really hard-pressed, and how handy the wish will be then! What ails you, anyway? What do you want? Haven't we everything we could possibly need?

"Since I got the ring, haven't we prospered so that everyone is marveling at our good fortune? Do be reasonable. In the meantime, you can be considering what we would better wish for." And that was the end of their dispute.

It really did seem as though the ring had brought a blessing with it, and in the course of time, the little farm became a very large one, upon whose many acres many servants were employed. And the farmer, despite all his wealth and prosperity, continued to work as hard as ever, from sheer force of habit.

But in the evening, when he had finished his supper, he would sit on his doorstep, in the falling twilight, smoking his pipe contentedly, and wishing his neighbors good evening. Thus many years sped by. Occasionally, when they were all by themselves, with no one near to overhear them, she would make him all sorts of propositions concerning the wish. But he always replied that they had ample time left. And as time went on, they spoke of it less and less frequently, and finally ceased to mention it at all.

Not that they had forgotten it. Far from it; for a dozen times a day he would turn it around on his finger, as though about to make a wish. But he always carefully guarded his lips from speaking it aloud. Thirty years slipped by, then forty. The farmer and his wife were old and gray, and still the wish remained unuttered.

Then the gracious All-Father blessed them both, and summoned them both to their final reward, in the self-same night. Children and grand-children wept around their bier, and refused to be comforted. One of them started to remove the ring from the old man's finger, with the intention of preserving it as a treasured keepsake, but the eldest son interfered, saying:

"Leave it where it is. He kept its history a secret all his life long. Let him carry it with him into the grave. It is probably an old love token. Our blessed mother also often looked at it, as though she, too, knew its secret. If the truth were known, she probably gave it to him herself, when they were young."

So the wishing ring, which in reality was no wishing ring, was buried with him, and he never knew the truth. It certainly had brought them all the happiness and good

fortune one could desire, and the original ring could have done no more. So you see, dear children, that it all depends upon who holds possession of a thing. For even the best of things in evil hands may prove a curse rather than a blessing.

THE FORGOTTEN CHIME

Many, many years ago, there lived a man who had grown wholly out of sympathy with his friends and things in general. Finally he betook himself to the forest, where he built himself a hermitage, and renouncing the world and its follies, he found peace and quietude in a simple woodland life.

Near his abode was a forest chapel, which boasted only a painting of a sad-faced Madonna, an altar, and one tiny bell. The hermit took upon himself the task of ringing the bell once every day. Close to the chapel was a cool, purling brook bubbling out of the ground, at which he slaked his thirst.

For food he ate the wild fruits of the

forest, except when the simple-hearted peasants of the neighboring villages brought him their wholesome offerings of home-made bread and cake and jelly, with an occasional cold roast or pot-pie.

Thus he lived peacefully for many years, ere he was gathered to his final rest. Then one day, some peasants found him, lying on his lowly bed, with his hands folded peacefully across his motionless breast. And they wept tears of sorrow and regret, declaring that they would never again meet so pious a hermit.

And indeed they were right. For from that time on, the hermitage was deserted, except when some roving huntsman bent his footsteps thither, or when some maid went to the brook to fill her jug. The straw roof became covered with patches of dark moss, and blackberry bushes and clematis pushed their rank way up to the very

windows. The field mice made their homes in the hermit's leafy couch, while the redstart built his nest in the very altar. The forest and its denizens closed in on their former possession.

Spring was about to make its entry, and the Earth was preparing to awake from its long winter sleep. The South-wind was wafted over the sea, on dewy pinions. It rustled the trees gently, and the pine cones and dry twigs fell to the ground.

The streams and brooks awoke, and gurgled softly over their pebbles to hasten on their winding way. The snowdrops and anemones raised their timid heads amid the forest moss. The showy spurge-laurel put on a red silk robe, and the hoopee, with its brilliant crest, announced the arrival of the cuckoo. The hedges shook off their last dead leaves, and with swelling buds awaited the call of Spring.

The deserted bell in the crumbling belfry looked sadly at all these preparations for Easter. In former years, when the bells pealed out their happy Easter chimes, it also had raised its voice, and had sung in chorus with its haughty church tower sisters. But that time had long since passed.

No hand had touched its cord at Easter-time since the death of the hermit. There it hung, silent and forgotten, in the little belfry, and no worse fate can befall a bell than to be silent at Easter-time.

It was Holy Week. On Ash Wednesday the hare came bounding through the forest, and stopped in front of the chapel, to see if the little bell had any errands for him to do in town. "I am on my way thither," he said. "I have been chosen for the Easter rabbit, and have my hands so full that I don't know which end my head is on." But the bell remained silent, and the hare sped on its way.

The next night a great noise was heard on all sides. The deer fled to cover, thinking the Wild Huntsman was abroad. It was not the Wild Huntsman, however; it was the bells flying toward Rome, to obtain the Pope's blessing. The bell from the cloister on the mountain across the way came over and stopped a moment to chat with the deserted bell.

"Are you not coming along?" it asked.

"I should dearly love to," lamented the little bell, "but I have been idle all year long, and therefore dare not. But if you really wish to do me a favor, I beg of you, speak a good word for me, when you see the Holy Father in Rome. Perchance he may send someone to ring me on Easter Sunday. Will you do me the favor?"

The cloister bell muttered something about its not being possible. Then raising itself like a clumsy bird, it flew along after

the others. The forgotten bell was disconsolate.

"Be content that they leave you in peace," said the Owl. "These stupid forest creatures know nothing about chimes, and besides, they would disturb my meditations. But I'll build my nest near you, so that you may not feel entirely deserted. And you will profit thereby, for I am one from whom you may learn a great deal."

Easter morning dawned. The mists still clung to the mountain sides. The cool morning breezes set the tree-tops rustling like the soft tones of a harp. The first streaks of sunrise gilded the tops of the mountains, and the pine trees sighed and stretched out their branches, as though just awakening from sleep.

Then the sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, the forest birds began to flutter in their leafy nests, and to lift up their

sweet voices in a song of praise. Only the little bell remained sad and silent.

In the selfsame hour, a young man passed along the highway leading through the forest. He wore a leather jerkin and a feather in his hat. A broad hunting knife, with a deer-horn handle, and a rifle hung at his left side. He carried a heavily-packed bag of badger-skin slung across his shoulders.

This, together with the staff of black-thorn which he carried in his right hand, betrayed the fact that he was not out hunting, but setting out on a long journey. A little farther on, a pathway led off from the main road towards the old mill. And at this point, the stranger stayed his steps for a moment, as though undecided which way to go. But he quickly made up his mind. Casting a gloomy look in the direction of the mill, he tossed his head in dis-

dain, and let such a lusty huntsman's call escape him, that the forest rang with the echo. Then he strode along, singing:

"You cool, green, leafy forest glades,
Farewell, our pathways sever.
For Fame in distant lands to seek,
I leave you now forever.
A huntsman, I,
With practised eye
And skillful in the chase,
Now take my flight
To seek the fight
And bloody battle-place."

"A lame gray falcon, in the woods,
Sits pining night and day.
A magic spell enthralls him there;
He cannot fly away.
For a nest, he'd change
Broad Freedom's range,
He fain no more would roam.
The spell is o'er,
Rise, falcon, soar!
And wing your swift flight home."

But the last words came with difficulty, and the half-suppressed sigh at its close accorded ill with the light-hearted song. Suddenly the young stranger left the high-way, and struck across the forest in the direction of the hermitage. He stopped at the brook to quench his thirst, and drank its cool clear water out of a wooden cup which he carried.

He emptied the last few drops on the ground, saying, "Well, it's all over now."

The pure cool water had evidently failed to cool him, for he sank on the moss, under the shade of a tree, near the hermitage, and covered his face with both hands. And while he is resting here, let me tell you his story.

The previous summer he had returned to his native land after a long absence, and entered into the employ of the old gamekeeper. He had seen a good bit of

the world in his day. He had scaled the Alps and hunted chamois in company with the Emperor's retinue of huntsmen. He had followed them to the brilliant hunting palaces, where he had beheld the gay assemblies of courtiers and beautiful ladies of high degree.

Yet no matter where he had chanced to roam, he had carried with him enshrined in his faithful heart, the image of the miller's daughter. He had returned to his old home with a heart full of sweet hopes, and a snug little sum of money which he had saved. It had all come to naught. His dream of happiness was shattered, and he was hastening away to offer his services as a soldier in foreign climes.

And this is how it happened. He had met her for the first time after his return, here at this very brook, whither she had come to draw water. He remained hidden

close by, until she knelt to fill her pitcher. Then he sprang forth with a cry of joy, and attempted to clasp her in his arms. She was very much frightened, until she recognized him. Then her fright gave way to anger, and following its impulse she pushed him over backwards, and hastened from the place.

Later on he tried to make amends for his thoughtlessness. It was at the Harvest Festival, when old and young were wending their joyous way to the place where the dancing was going on. He waylaid the pretty maiden, and greeting her in the most friendly manner, had offered her a fragrant nosegay of spice carnations.

No sooner had she recognized the donor, than she turned on her heel, and hastened back to her father's mill. The poor hunter was wholly disheartened, and threw the unoffending flowers in the brook. How

could he know that the contrary creature afterward fished them out of the mill-dam and treasured them most carefully till they died?

A great anger against her rose in his heart. "Very well," he thought, "you go your way, I'll go mine." And that she might not have the satisfaction of knowing that he took her treatment to heart, he gathered together a few choice spirits, and pretty soon their wild conduct was the talk of the countryside.

Thus he spent the entire winter. With the spring came the tidings that war had been declared against Italy. And soon after, the sound of the recruiting-gun was heard throughout the land. Later on, the streets swarmed with troops marching forth to fight for their Emperor and Fatherland.

The young hunter gave his employer notice, gave his boon companions a fare-

well drink, and hastened forth toward the battle-field. And as we already know, he had gone as far as the hermitage, where we left him resting.

As he sat there, his sharp ear caught the sound of a light rustling in the underbrush. His hunting instinct was instantly awake, and with eager eyes he sought the cause. But it was no wild animal going to drink that was stirring among the bushes. Far from it. He could see a white-clad figure between the trunks of the pine trees.

With noiseless steps our hunter crept behind the walls of the cloister, for there, coming toward him, was the one he so fain would forget, yet could not. She walked slowly, stooping now and then to pluck a flower, which she added to the nosegay in her hand.

It was the miller's daughter, and every time she stooped, her long golden braids

swept the ground. When she reached the brook, she filled her earthern jar with water, and put her flowers in it. Then, entering the chapel, she placed the flowers on the shrine before the sad-eyed Madonna, and knelt down on the mossy ground before it.

She repeated the *Ave Maria*, and then proceeded to pour out her heart in prayer. It was a prayer full of self-accusation and remorse; remorse for having driven him to danger and bloodshed. Then she begged Heaven for a sign that he still cared for her. In which case, she declared, she would walk as far as her feet would carry her to rescue him from danger. "Just a sign, dear Heaven," she begged.

Then softly, just above her head chimed the little bell in the belfry. It was but a single tone, yet it rang through her soul like a song of joy. She raised her eyes inquiringly, and the bell pealed once more,

this time more loud and joyously. She turned quickly, and there in the door of the chapel stood the young hunter, extending his arms toward her. And this time, you may be very sure, she did not repulse him.

The tit-mice and the gold-finch nesting amid the pines fluttered around them, and even the timid field-mice peeped out of their burrows to behold their joyful reunion. After a while the young man reached for the bell-rope, exclaiming, "Dear little bell, you have brought us together. Now you shall announce our happiness to the forest-world."

And the little bell in the cloister belfry shone brightly in the golden sunlight, and swung untiringly to and fro, while it sang its song of praise. The preceding evening all the distinguished church-bells from the surrounding villages had returned from

their journey to Rome. They had beheld many wonders. But, notwithstanding all this, not one of them sang so joyful an Easter song as the little bell in the forest.

THE WONDERFUL ORGAN

Years ago a young organ-maker lived in Germany. He was a master-workman, and each organ he built seemed more perfect than any of the previous ones. At last, he reached such a point of perfection in his art, that he built an organ which played of itself whene'er a bridal-pair, of whose marriage God approved, entered the church in which it stood.

Just about the time he completed his masterpiece, he became acquainted with a young girl, who seemed to him the most beautiful and pious maiden in all the country round. Having wooed and won her, he set about making preparations for the marriage.

On the day of the wedding they entered

the church, the bride with her bridal-bouquet, and the groom with a nosegay in his buttonhole, followed by a long procession of their friends and relatives. But the bridegroom's heart was filled with naught but pride and ambition. He had no thought of his bride nor of his Maker. He thought only of what a wonderful workman he was, and of how the people would marvel when his organ began to play of itself.

Thus he entered the church, but contrary to his expectations, he himself did the marveling, for, to his surprise and chagrin, the organ remained silent. What had happened? He never once thought he had anything to do with it. Of course, the fault must lie with his bride. No doubt she was not pleasing to the Lord, he thought in his stupid pride. So all day long he spoke no word to her, but glowered at her in silence. And when evening came, he

quietly gathered his belongings together, and at his first opportunity, stole out of the house and deserted his bride.

He traveled for many hundred miles, and finally settled in a strange land, where no one was acquainted with him, nor indeed cared enough about him to inquire whence he came. Here he lived for ten long years.

Then he was seized with a sudden longing to visit his native land. There was also a nameless fear in his heart. He could not stop thinking of his beautiful bride, and of how he had so basely deserted her. Where was she now, and how had she fared during his absence?

He tried in vain to still the longing in his heart, but it finally drove him back to his native land, to sue for her forgiveness. He gathered up his belongings, and set out on his journey. He knew no pause nor rest. Weary and foot-sore, he wandered day and

night, and the nearer he came to his old home, the greater grew his impatience to get there.

And even greater than his impatience waxed the fear in his heart that perchance he might not find her as sweet and friendly as she had been. At length the turrets of his native town rose into view. How bright they gleamed in the golden sun. They seemed to beckon him to hasten.

He began to run as fast as he could. People stood still and stared after him as he sped by. They shook their heads, and declared he must be either insane or a thief, to run like that. When he reached the gate leading into town, he met a funeral. Behind the bier walked a long procession of people, and everyone was weeping.

He inquired whose funeral it was, and why they wept so bitterly. He was told that the departed was the deserted bride of

their former organ-maker. Then they proceeded to tell him how dear and good and beautiful she had been. They told of her many good deeds, and as he listened, he learned that her last ten years had been devoted to caring for the sick and unfortunate. Tears rose to his eyes, but he made no reply. Instead, he bent his head in reverence, and joined the procession.

Indeed, he even pushed his way forward and helped to carry the coffin. No one recognized him, nor sought to disturb his sobs and tears with untimely questionings. Perchance they thought he had but recently buried some one he loved.

At length they reached the church, and as the pall-bearers crossed the threshold with the coffin, the organ began to play of itself, and such music as none had ever heard before. They set the coffin down before the altar, and the stranger leaned

against a pillar, listening to the wondrous tones.

Higher and sweeter and clearer they rose and swelled, until the whole church shook and trembled. The stranger closed his eyes, for he was tired from his long journey. But his heart was filled with joy, for he knew by the token of the organ that God had forgiven him. And as the last strains died away in lingering sweetness, he fell lifeless to the marble floor.

The people hastened to his assistance, but he was beyond all need of earthly help. When they discovered who it was that lay before them, they opened the coffin and placed him beside his bride. As they closed the lid, the organ began to play once more. But this time it was as soft as a breath of wind. Then it ceased, and since then it has never again been heard, except when played by human hands.

(F. 135) THE FALCONER (*Eugene Fromentin*)

THE WATERS OF FORGETFULNESS

In the chamber of the round-tower, which was decorated with all sorts of sportsmanlike trophies, such as antlers, weapons, and wings of wild birds, sat a young man in a wooden arm-chair.

He was twisting a bow-string out of the sinews of a marten, and singing a merry hunting song as he worked. He wore a hunting suit, and his closely cropped head told the fact that he was a servant in the employ of the owner of the castle. His name was Hans.

Overhead a swinging hoop was attached to the ceiling, and in it sat a hooded falcon, with its wings tied together. Every once in so often, the hunter paused in the midst

of his work, to set the slowly swinging hoop in swifter motion.

He did this so that the falcon might not fall asleep, as it was a nestling which he was training for the chase. And the first step in training a hunting falcon was to discipline him through hunger and sleeplessness.

Hans was the Count's falconer, and the old gentleman had kept him more than busy. But in these latter days, he was having an easier time. The old Count no longer went hunting. No, indeed. For the last year he had lain still and silent in a stone sarcophagus decorated with his coat-of-arms. And his widow, the Lady Adelaide, sat all day long in prayer with the old chaplain, and had no thoughts for the chase.

But to-day, the Countess was weary of the unceasing prayers, and came out of

her retirement, wandering for the first time all over her estate. The song of the lusty huntsman must have seemed a welcome change from the monotonous psalm-singing of the chaplain; for she followed the sound of the voice, until she reached the falconer's room in the tower.

Hans looked astonished when he saw the haughty lady in her mourning-veil and somber garments. He arose and bowed to the ground. Lady Adelaide's bright eyes beamed on the slender young man, and she smiled graciously. So graciously, that her smile seemed to him as bright as the sunshine of May.

She asked him many questions regarding the training of falcons, and the chase; and when she went away, she gave him such a searching look, that he blushed, and turned away his head, like a bashful maid of fourteen.

Not many days afterward Lady Adelaide, mounted on a snow-white palfrey, rode through the forest. But this time she was not dressed in mourning. She wore a green velvet riding habit, and instead of a widow's veil she had on a sable hat with long waving plumes.

Behind her, with a gray falcon on his wrist, rode Hans the falconer, whose eyes seemed to shine for joy. They had already ridden quite a distance, and the turrets of the castle had long since disappeared behind the broad branches of the tree-tops, when Lady Adelaide turned her head and said:

"Ride beside me, Hans."

Hans willingly did as he was bade. The path was narrow, and the Countess' riding habit brushed against his knee as they rode along. The trees rustled lightly, the chaffinches sang, and occa-

sionly a timid squirrel or rabbit would leap across their path and disappear among the bushes.

At times the crackling of the bushes could be heard, as some larger denizen of the forest crashed its way through the thick underbrush; or twigs rustled as some startled bird fluttered noisily among the boughs, and then all was still again.

Then the Countess turned to the falconer and smilingly said:

"Let me see, Hans, if you are a clever huntsman."

"Dearest huntsman, give me light.
What soars higher than falcon or kite?"

And without stopping to think Hans answered:

"High flies the falcon, high the kite,
Yet the eagle soars to a greater height."

"Good," laughed the Lady Adelaide, and asked a second riddle:

"Dearest huntsman, tell me true,
What soars higher then eagles do?"

The falconer thought a few moments ere he replied:

"Higher than eagle's flight there streams
The golden sunlight's glowing beams."

The Countess nodded her head approvingly.

"Come, you are doing fine," and then she asked a third one:

"Dear sir, hide it not from me
What higher than the sun can be?"

But Hans had reached his intellectual limit, and could think of no suitable response. Then the gracious Lady drew rein, leaned over toward him, and whispered softly:

"As high as Heaven the sun's gold ball —
Yet love, true love, soars over all."

And then she kissed him.

Two nutpeckers, on swift blue wings,

fluttered out of the hazel bushes and flew chirping into the forest, eager to relate what they had seen. And next morning the sparrows nesting 'neath the castle eaves twittered to each other:

"Tweet, tweet, twee-ee-ee,
The lady loves Hans faithfully."

Yes, indeed, it was a happy time for Hans. He allowed his hair to grow in long golden ringlets to his shoulders, a custom not permitted to servants, and wore silver spurs and a heron's feather in his hat.

And such dreams as he indulged in! He spent hours building castles in the air, each more beautiful than the last. He did not obtain a castle, however, but a splendid forester's lodge with antlers on its gable and broad fields and meadows round it, was given to him for life.

And there he reigned as district forester.

And when the Lady Adelaide came thither to visit, he would hasten to his doorway, to wave his hat at her. Then he would lift her from the saddle, and set milk and honey and bread on the table before her. And thus the summer, autumn, and half the winter passed. Then came carnival time. Many guests from surrounding estates came thither and the castle looked almost like an inn.

The forester, Hans, sat alone and lonely in his secluded lodge. Only occasionally did any of the gay doings at the castle reach his ears. At last came tidings which were anything but joyful to Hans. Lady Adelaide was going to be married, so ran the tale, and it sounded like a death-knell in the young man's ears.

He locked his house, and made his way toward the hill leading to the castle, all the while muttering something between

his teeth which did not sound like a prayer. As he reached the foot of the hill where the winding path began to lead upward, he heard hoof-beats and a silvery laugh which pierced his soul like a two-edged sword.

Down the pathway came the Countess, riding her snow-white palfrey; and at her side was a splendid looking man, in rich attire, who rode a coal-black stallion, and never took his eyes from the face of the beautiful lady at his side.

The heart of the young hunter gave a wild throb, but he controlled himself, and seating himself on a stone near the path, he assumed the posture of a beggar, and as the pair approached him, he sang:

"As high as Heaven the sun's gold ball —
Yet love, true love soars over all."

The haughty knight drew rein, and

reached toward the singer with his whip, asking his companion:

"What does he mean? Who is the man?"

The Countess turned pale, but quickly collecting her wits, replied, "A crazy hunter. Come, let us go on, I shudder at his very presence."

The knight loosened his purse, and tossed a gold piece to Hans, who was quite near to him. Hans cried aloud, and threw himself face downward on the ground. Then the two put spurs to their horses and rode quickly away.

The hoof-beats had long died away into silence, before Hans raised himself from the ground. He wiped the dust and dirt from his face, pulled his hat over his eyes, and went back into the forest. He kept on walking, avoiding the beaten paths, until night fell. Then he threw

himself down under a tree, wrapped himself in his coat, and utterly worn out, fell asleep.

And there he lay, sleeping the dreamless sleep of exhaustion, till the cold air of morning awoke him. But as soon as he arose, all his bitter grief came crowding back into his mind like a diabolical apparition.

"Oh, if I could only forget it, if I could only forget it!" he cried aloud. "There is a burn somewhere, in which there lies a spring, of whose waters one has only to drink, to have all memory of the past fade from his mind. Who can show me the way to this spring?"

"I can," said a voice near him. "I am well acquainted with the Waters of Forgetfulness and such information as I possess is at your service."

Hans looked and saw a young fellow

in ragged black clothes, whose bare toes peeped inquisitively out from his worn-out shoes. He claimed to be a vagrant student, who were common enough figures four hundred years ago. They were students who wandered around from one university to another, without any definite occupation or settled abode. This one continued:

"The water which causes forgetfulness is called Lethe, and is to be found in Greece. Thither you must journey, and you will find out the particulars on the spot itself. If you would attain forgetfulness with less trouble to yourself, come with me to the Sign of the Blue Grapes, which lies not far from here. The hostess of the tavern will offer you so much forgetfulness, that your purse will become hardly less flat than mine."

Thus spake the vagrant. Hans raised

himself and followed him to the forest inn. There they drank each other's health all day long, and half the following night. And as they lay together in perfect harmony at midnight, on the bench behind the stove, Hans had indeed forgotten everything which oppressed and troubled him.

However, with the first gray streaks of dawn, he awoke to all the bitterness of the Past and a raging headache beside. He settled his and his companion's score, and bidding the latter a curt farewell, took his departure.

"Oh, if one could only forget!" he said, as he went along, striking his forehead with his fist. "I must find the spring. Otherwise I shall indeed take leave of my senses."

On the road there was an old half dead willow, and on the willow sat the raven,

who turned his head to gaze attentively at the lonely wanderer.

"You world-wise bird," said the huntsman, "you know everything that happens upon earth. Tell me, pray, where flow the Waters of Forgetfulness?"

"I only wish I knew!" answered the raven, "so that I myself might drink of them. I knew of a nest in which were seven fat dormice, which had been raised on nuts. And yesterday, when I went to see how the dear toothsome little creatures were getting along, when I got there, whom should I meet but the marten just coming away from the nest, and as I live, not one single morsel of those dear little dormice was to be found.

"And now, no matter where I go or stay, I am reminded of what I missed. I can't get those nice fat little dormice out of my head. Yes! Who knows

where to find the Waters of Forgetfulness?

"But do you know one thing, young man? Go to the witch of the forest, who is said to know more than all the rest of creation put together. It is possible that she is also acquainted with the Spring of Forgetfulness."

Hans thanked him and started off to find her. The witch was at home. She sat in front of her hut spinning, and as she spun, her white head kept nid-nid-nodding. Near her sat a gray tom-cat with grass green eyes, washing his paws and purring contentedly.

The young man walked up to the old woman, whom he greeted with great respect, and then stated his business.

"I do indeed know the Spring of Forgetfulness very well," said the witch. "Nor shall I withhold the drink from you, if you

really desire it, my poor boy." But as you no doubt have heard before, 'No work, no pay.'

"Therefore if you wish a glass of this costly beverage, you must first perform three tasks, which I shall impose on you. Will you?"

"If I can," he answered.

"Never fear! I shall ask nothing impossible of you. You must cut down the trees in the woods behind my house. That is the first thing."

Hans could do this right well. The witch gave him an axe and led him to the spot. He at once set to work. He tried to imagine that every swing of his axe was a blow dealt at his rival. The trees fell groaning to the ground beneath the lusty strokes of his axe, and every groan they emitted did his heart good.

Thus evening came on, and Hans be-

gan to think about getting something to eat, since he was becoming very hungry. He had not long to wait, for a young girl came out of the hut, carrying a basket of food and drink, which she set before the tired woodchopper.

As Hans raised his eyes, he beheld the beautiful figure with flowing golden hair, which glistened in the last rays of the setting sun. She was the witch's daughter. She looked at the gloomy young woodsman with gentle eyes, and paused a moment before him. But as he said nothing, she went away again.

Then Hans fell upon the meal with great relish. Afterward he lay down on the bed of moss and pine boughs which he had gathered, and fell into a dreamless sleep. But when he awoke next morning, the memory of his pain awoke too.

Thereat he seized his axe, attacked the

tree trunks with such force, that his lusty strokes echoed through the woodland as far as one could walk in an hour. And in the evening when the pretty girl brought him his food, Hans did not look quite so gloomy as he had the previous day.

And because he felt that he must say something, he remarked, "Pleasant weather to-day, isn't it?" And she answered:

"Yes, lovely weather," nodded in a friendly manner and returned home. Thus seven days passed by, one just like the other, and on the seventh day the last tree was felled. The witch came, praised him for his industry and said, "Now for the second task."

He must dig out the roots, plough the ground and sow the fruit and grain. This took him seven weeks. Each evening after his work was done, the witch's daughter brought him food. She sat beside him

on a fallen tree and listened with shining eyes while he told her tales of the outside world. And when he had finished, she would hold out her white hand and say, "Good-night, dear Hans."

Then she would return to her dwelling, and Hans would throw himself upon his bed of boughs, and instantly fall asleep. When seven weeks had passed, the witch came round to inspect his work. She was well satisfied, and praised his diligence, ending with, "Now comes the third and last task. Out of these fallen trees you must build me a nice house with seven rooms, and when you shall have finished that, you may have your cup of Forgetfulness and go where you please."

So Hans became an architect, and with axe and saw built a splendid house. But it was very slow work and took him seven whole months, for he had no workmen to

assist him. However he was neither discouraged nor displeased, since he really liked the cool green forest, and willingly would have remained with his present task-master forever.

Occasionally he would think of his former grief, but only as one thinks of a bad dream, from which one is glad to be awakened. Every evening the golden-haired daughter came to him with his meal, and after he had eaten it, they would sit on the fallen trees, and sing together merry hunting songs, and songs of partings, misunderstandings, and reunions.

Thus seven months rolled by, and at length the house was finished from the threshold to the gable. Hans planted a young fir tree on the gable, according to custom, and the girl made wreaths of fir boughs twined with red-ash berries, with which she decorated the walls.

Then the old witch came hobbling along on her crutch, the tom-cat on her shoulder, to view his finished work. She looked very festive, and in one hand she held a cup carved out of wood and filled with the drink of Forgetfulness.

"Well, you have completed the three tasks I imposed on you," she said, "and now for your reward. This is the cup for which you longed. Take it, and when you drain the last drop, all memory of the entire Past will disappear from your mind."

The huntsman stretched his hand out for the cup, then hestitated.

"Drink," said the witch, "and forget everything as you desired."

"Everything?"

"Yes, every single thing. Your former grief, myself, and"—

"Me, too," interrupted her pretty daugh-

ter, shielding her eyes with her hand, that he might not see her tears.

Thereat the young man seized the cup and threw it with such force to the ground that it broke into pieces, and the glistening drops lay on the ground like dew, and he cried:

"Mother, I'll stay with you!"

And before he well knew how it happened, he had the girl's head on his shoulder and she was sobbing for joy.

And the trees rustled their approval joyously, the green corn waved in the breeze, the birds warbled a blithe refrain, and the old gray cat walked round and round the happy pair, purring in sweet content.

And now, dear children, I could easily tell you that the witch changed into a beautiful fairy, her daughter into a charming princess and the good substantial

house of wood into a magnificent palace. You might perhaps like it better, but since I prefer to stick to the truth, we will have to leave things as they are.

Still, something wonderful did happen after all. Wherever a drop of the Waters of Forgetfulness fell upon the ground, there sprang up a tiny flower with eyes of heavenly blue and a heart of gold. And wherever one was seen, countless numbers soon sprang up, and in time they spread all over the land. And if you do not know the name of this blue flower, I fear you are not one of those for whom this story was written.

THE OLD TRUNK

The trunk about which I am going to tell you, belonged to an old man, who was accustomed to travel a great deal. It was not a handsome trunk. Quite the contrary, for it was covered with rough seal skin, and its corners were edged in iron. It was also strengthened with iron bands, much as a barrel is with hoops.

It evidently had been made more with an eye to its serviceable qualities than to beauty. Since its advent into the world, the moths had made their way into its shaggy cover, and its iron trimmings had become quite rusted. It had also received many dents and scars in the course of its travels.

The baggage-handlers saw at a glance that it could stand a great deal. And they

would knock it about with such careless violence that the wonder is how it ever managed to survive such rough treatment. All this was not much calculated to improve its disposition, you may be sure. So in time it grew very ugly, and would knock into and thump against everything within reach of its iron corners.

"Keep your distance," it would say to the trunks it met in traveling, when they complained of its ugliness. "I should think you could see how rough I am."

The man to whom it belonged was a queer person. He lived in an elegant house, which was most beautifully furnished.

When he was at home, nothing would do but that the ugly old trunk must stand in his room directly under a beautiful gilt mirror, where it was woefully out of place. And when he was traveling, the first thing he would do was to have the trunk brought up to his room.

"It certainly must be filled with gold," the people said. "It is so heavy, and he never allows it out of his sight."

But they were entirely mistaken. There was something in it, to be sure. But gold? No, indeed! Gold least of all. When the old gentleman was alone in his room, he would press a secret spring, and up the lid would fly, disclosing a magnificent red velvet chest, trimmed with gold cord and lace. It was a perfect beauty. But if he thought he heard anyone approaching the room, bang! would go the cover, and it would be an ugly old trunk once more.

Now, one of the maid-servants employed by the old man had more than the usual share of curiosity, and often wondered what was in the old trunk. She was likewise very sly, so one day she left her shoes outside, and crept noiselessly into the room in her stocking feet. And as luck would

have it, the trunk stood open. She was quite close to it, and when she beheld its red velvet and gold lace, she quite forgot herself, and cried, "Good gracious, how beautiful it is inside!"

Just then the trunk became conscious that someone was in the room. Bang! went its lid, and almost snapped her finger off. For just at that particular moment, she had been busily endeavoring to find out if the red cover were really velvet, by feeling of it.

"Ouch!" she screamed in pain and fright, "what a nasty old thing you are! No one dare meddle with you."

And ever after, if anyone asked her about the old trunk, which was so jealously guarded by its master, and wished to know if perchance some treasure were concealed therein, she would say:

"There is nothing wonderful about the

old trunk, and still less inside. Everybody has his own little peculiarities, especially those who are old and unmarried. The old man has made an idol of the trunk, that is all."

But she was very much mistaken, for there was something peculiar about it, after all. Every now and then the old gentleman would carefully lock and bolt the door. Then he would press the secret spring, and the trunk would fly open. Next he would listen carefully, to make sure no one was lurking outside.

As soon as he was sure that no one was peeking through the keyhole, he would lift out the velvet chest and put it on the table. Then he would touch another hidden spring, and the red velvet cover would fly open. And what was inside? You would never, never guess, for, though perfectly true, it seems almost incredible.

For no sooner was the lid opened, than out sprang a graceful little fairy. A real live fairy, and a princess to boot. She was as dainty and sweet as an apple-blossom which has been kissed to rosy beauty by the sun. She wore a white and pink silk gown, and high-heeled pink shoes. Two long golden braids swept the hem of her gown, and her eyes were as blue as the August skies.

There she sat, perched on the edge of the chest, swinging her dainty heels, and telling the old man the most charming fairy tales one could ever imagine. The old man would lean back in his chair and listen with all his might.

But one day, when she finished relating a story, she turned to him and said:

"Just think how many, many beautiful stories I have told you. I do believe, however, that they go in one ear and out of the

other. Why don't you make some use of them? Why don't you write them down?"

"That's a good idea," he agreed. "I can write them down, to be sure, but they will not sound half so charming as when told by you. I will write them down, if you wish me to, but remember! No one must know where they came from, and least of all, that I have you hidden in my old trunk. Otherwise, people would flock here to see you, and they would want to touch you with their clumsy fingers, and I couldn't bear that. Besides, the red velvet on your box would soon become very shabby."

"No, indeed! No one must see me," replied the dainty little fairy. "And yet, how they would marvel, could they only know what was in your old trunk." And she laughed in glee.

"Hush!" said the old man, "someone is

knocking at the door. Quick! Jump into your box!"

Then he hurriedly replaced the box in the trunk, and closed its shabby lid. And when the maid servant — for it was she again — entered the room, with her tray of tea-things for her master's supper, the old trunk was standing, as ugly and shabby as ever, in its accustomed place under the mirror.

And no one ever knew of the existence of the dainty little fairy, nor dreamed of how she charmed away the old man's lonely hours and made life beautiful for him. But later on, when these stories appeared in book form, people did wonder how such a very commonplace old gentleman could have had such charming thoughts.

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